

Changes in weight

This information is about weight change from cancer or its treatments. Some cancer treatments, side effects or lifestyle changes can cause you to [gain or lose weight](#).

Cancer or the side effects of treatment can cause weight loss. You may [not feel hungry](#), or feel full soon after starting eating. Some people may [feel sick](#) or find that foods taste different. Some types of cancer make your body use up more energy, even if you are not very active. You may lose weight even if you are eating well.

Some people may [gain weight](#). It can be harder to have a [healthy diet](#) after a cancer diagnosis. You may also become less active. Some cancer treatments such as hormonal therapy or steroids can cause weight gain. Talk to your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP. They can refer you to a dietitian. A dietitian can give you advice about which foods are best for you.

Tips for managing weight loss

- You can [add extra energy and protein to your diet](#) without having to eat more. You can fortify milk by adding 2 to 4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to 570ml (1 pint) of full-fat milk and mixing it together. Or you can fortify plant-based milks, such as oat or coconut milk, by adding ground nuts or peanut butter powder. Keep the milk in the fridge to use in drinks, on cereals and for cooking.
- When [shopping](#), choose full-fat foods instead of foods labelled 'diet' or 'light'.
- Fry foods in oil, ghee or butter.
- Add extra butter, cream or oil to bread, potatoes, pasta and cooked vegetables. Add cheese to cooked vegetables or soup and extra paneer to curries. Add cream, plain yoghurt, sour cream, creme fraiche or cream cheese to sauces, soups or casseroles. You can use plant-based alternatives.
- Use fortified milk on cereals or to make porridge. Add honey, golden syrup or sugar to breakfast cereals or porridge. You can also add dried fruit or nuts, or fresh or stewed fruit.
- Add whole or blended beans, lentils or peas to soups, curries, tagines, and stews and casseroles.
- Choose vegetables that are rich in protein and energy, such as spinach, sweetcorn, beans and lentils.
- Add evaporated milk, condensed milk or cream, or plant-based alternatives to desserts and hot drinks. Have cream, custard or ice-cream with desserts.

Tips for managing weight gain

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet and trying to be more [physically active](#) is the best way to manage your weight. It is also better to lose weight gradually. Talk to your health care professional about healthy menu ideas.
- Eat healthy amounts of a variety of low-calorie food types and reduce your portions of high-calorie foods. Choose healthy foods with lots of fruit and vegetables and with less fat and sugar instead. Check the food labels of packaged foods as a guide for healthier choices.
- Eat meals at regular times and only as much food as you need. This depends on how active you are.
- Eat slowly and avoid second helpings. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that you are full. Try to wait a while before deciding whether you want more.
- It can help to start the day with a healthy breakfast. This may help you avoid eating sugary or high-fat snacks in the morning.
- Use a smaller dinner plate. Bigger plates need more food to fill them.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids. Sometimes we mistake being thirsty for being hungry. Try to have a glass of water before meals.
- If you drink alcohol, keep to the recommended [NHS drinking guidelines](#). This will help keep you as healthy as possible and can also prevent weight gain.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including [audiobooks](#). Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on orders.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- MAC13613 [Eating problems and cancer](#)
- MAC13612 [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- MAC13614 [The building-up diet](#)
- MAC16337_ER [Eat a healthy diet](#) – Easy read

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line on **0808 808 00 00**.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk to [chat online](#) to one of our team.

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the [Relay UK app](#). Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

If you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#). Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

Other useful contact details

- World Cancer Research Fund Healthy recipes – visit www.wcrf-uk.org/healthy-eating/recipes
- NHS Eat well – visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well
- British Dietetic Association – visit www.bda.uk.com

Notes and questions
